

**FOLKESTONE & DISTRICT
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**
www.folkestonehistory.org

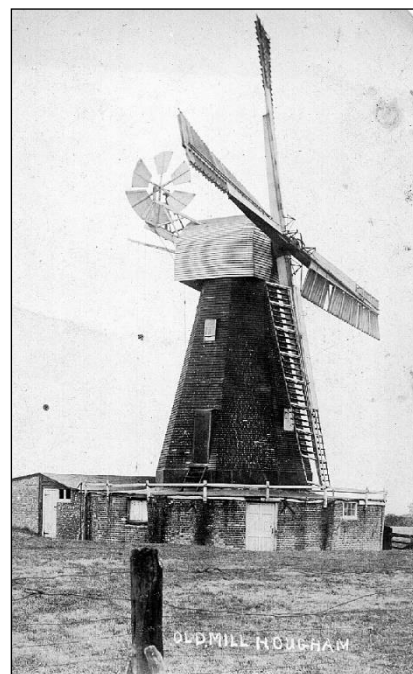
NEWSLETTER No. 68 – Autumn 2016

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Alan F Taylor

At the June meeting we welcomed guest speaker Andrew Wood who gave us his presentation on "Old Kent Windmills". Andrew started by showing images of East Kent windmills, which he took himself, in some cases with a drone, and he told us the history of them. He said most of his information came from a book entitled "Watermills and Windmills" by William Coles Finch, first published in 1933.

Andrew then played an audio visual on the following windmills: Bekesbourne Mill; Harbledown Mill; St. Martin's Mill, nr. Canterbury; St. Martin's Black Mill; Chillenden Post Mill; Barham Black Mill; Sarre Mill, which moved to Cranbrook and was re-named Union Mill; Eastry where there were two mills; The White Mill at Sandwich; Northbourne Old and New Mill; Upper Deal Mill; Ripple Mill; Martin Mill; St Margaret's Mill; Buckland Mill at Dover; Swingate Mill at Guston; West Hougham Mill (pictured); Hawkinge Mill and Ashley Mill at Cheriton.

Andrew then played an audio visual on Romney Marsh Mills, which included: Aldington Mill; Ruckinge Mill; Warehorne Mill; New Romney Mill; Lydd Old Mill and New Mill; and Brenzett Mill.



Fifty people attended the meeting, four of whom were visitors.

This year the Kent History Federation one day conference was hosted by Smarden Local History Society. Eight delegates from our Society attended. There were two hundred places available at the conference and there are 116 affiliated societies in the Federation, so we were very well represented!

At the July meeting we welcomed member speaker and author Vince Williams who presented his illustrated talk entitled 'Folkestone's Churches'. Vince had divided the talk into two or more parts because there are so many local churches, and so a further talk or talks will be forthcoming.

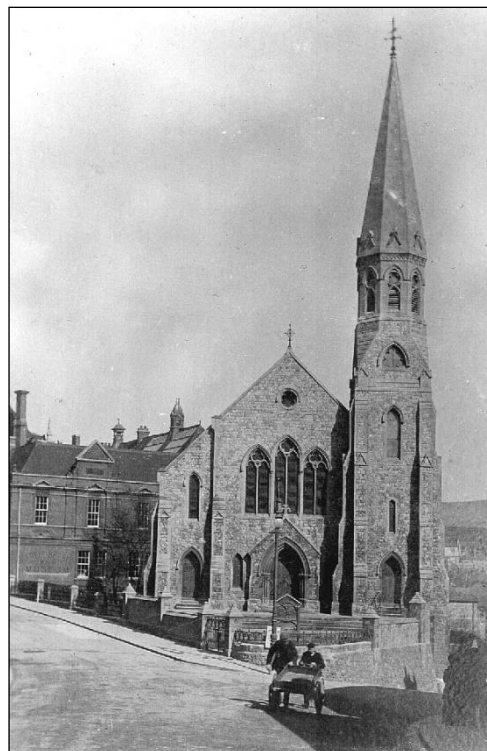
Folkestone's Churches– Part 1 (An Overview) by Vincent Williams

The first church covered was **Christ Church**. As Folkestone developed in the mid-19th century and spread further west, a new church was needed. Foundations for the church were being dug in 1848 and by 1850 the church had been built. There were extensions in 1869, 1880, 1885 and the tower was erected in 1897. The church was bombed on 17th May 1942 and two people were killed. The site is now a garden of remembrance.

An unattached Church of England church was the **Emmanuel Church** which opened in 1882 and was in Cheriton Road next to the Gun Brewery. The church closed down in 1910 after which, it

became a school for physical culture (i.e. an early gym!) then a shop until 1973 when it was demolished to build the Northern Distributor Road.

First mention of the **Wesleyan Methodists** was when they used the **Apollo Rooms** for worship in 1813, this building was somewhere near where the Royal George pub is today. Then they worshipped at **55 The Old High Street** and by 1824 they were in a carpenter's shop in **Elgar's Yard**. In 1828 they'd moved to a parlour in **Dover Street**, but expanded in earnest in 1831 by building a chapel at **34 The Old High Street** next to the Bayle steps. When this became dilapidated, they built their next chapel in 1851 in **Cow Street** (now Sandgate Road), next to the Kings Arms, which they then sold on in 1865 to build a bigger church on **Grace Hill**. The foundation stone was laid in 1865 and the church opened in 1866. Vince then showed a clip of cine-film with people climbing up the tower, which looked rather hair-raising. Due to the poor condition of the Grace Hill church by 1969 it was sold, together with the sites for Sandgate and **Canterbury Road Methodist** (built 1882) Churches so a new Methodist Church could be built in **Sandgate Road**. Starting in 1974 and at a cost of £170,000 it opened in June 1976. Apart from the Wesleyan Methodists there was also the **Primitive Methodists** who in 1878 had a church in **Dover Street** on the corner of Radnor Bridge Road. This group eventually merged with Grace Hill in 1933. This building then had various uses before being demolished to make way for four town houses.



Vince told us about floating churches such as those belonging to various Seamen's Missions – the Portsmouth & Gosport Mission had a ship built in 1887, called 'Herald of Mercy', which visited Folkestone a few times. There was also the **Fishermen's Bethel** on the Stade built by Mr Charles Barclay (of the banking family fame) at his own expense, in 1894. The building was extended in 1928 when a second floor was added but on Monday 11 November 1940 the building was destroyed by a bomb, and the site is now occupied by two small shops and a public toilet.

The next church covered was **St. Michael's and All Angels**. Cannon Woodward, Vicar of the Parish Church, campaigned to build yet another new church as the town was still expanding and in 1864 a site was given by John Andrews near Harvey St. The first church built was a wooden and iron structure, which was formerly opened July 1865 nicknamed the **Red Barn** it was reported that it could hold up to 600 people. The Red Barn remained until 1872. The foundation stone for its permanent replacement was laid in 1873 and the nave, chancel and lower part of the tower were built but work was slow and the church wasn't consecrated until 1878. There were further extensions in 1883 – a new aisle, vestry and organ chambers, and tower spire which were completed in 1885. The first vicar was the Rev. Edward Husband who was in office from 1878 to 1908 when he passed away. The church closed in 1940 due lack of parishioners and the onset of war. St. Michael's didn't re-open after the war and was demolished in 1953. In November 1955, the Marion Sherwood Trust (now merged with the John Bowley Trust) built four alms-houses on the site.

In 1909, the successor to Rev. Husband raised the money to build **Edward Husband Memorial Parish Hall** in Dover Road as effectively a church hall for St Michael's. The foundation stone was laid 12 September 1910 and it opened in November of that year. It was taken over in 1953 by a daughter church of the Parish Church and called **St Augustine's Mission Church** which was a relaunch of the previous St Augustine's Mission Church in Mill Bay which had closed in 1941 due to WW2.

In 1989 Canon Dilnot from the Parish Church invited **Folkestone's Greek Orthodox and Cypriot Communities** to share the building so the former church hall also housed **St. Mark & St. Fontini's**. Also in 1994 the building was refurbished and became known as St. Augustine's Centre but after Government funding was lost in 2014, parishioners from the former St Saviour's Church stepped in to share the building with St. Mark & St. Fontini's, as St Saviour's church in Canterbury Road had closed.

What would become the **Congregationalists** started when they broke away from Folkestone Anabaptists in 1797 and opened a chapel in **Fancy Street**, (now part of St. Michaels Street) in 1798. This building had been a Baptist Chapel before and was re-opened as part of the **Countess of Huntington Connexion** until 1824 when an independent minister was appointed. It closed and returned to the Connexion's use in 1836 until just before 1843 when it became independent church and started using the term Congregationalist. In 1850 due to lower numbers it took a brief step to become a Presbyterian church but in 1851 the church returned to Congregationalism and had swollen from 36 to over 300 members requiring a larger premises.

A plot of land was thus purchased at the end of **Tontine Street** in 1856 and a new church opened in 1857, it had a tower, nave and gallery, but no aisle. In 1870 an aisle was added and in 1885 the front was extended. Between 1860 and 1897 as Congregationalism grew in popularity, churches were also built at Sandgate, Cheriton, Radnor Park and Canterbury Road. After WW2 the Tontine Street church was in such a poor state it closed and was finally demolished in 1974. A new block of offices built on the site first housed Channel Tunnel offices, before it was renamed 'Benham House' where the 'first day cover' company was then situated, after which the building was rebuilt and renamed 'The Cube' where the Adult Education Centre is today housed.

The **Radnor Park** Congregational Church was built in 1896 and opened in 1897. The architect was Joseph Gardner who died during construction and Mr Wilks took over. The builder was Hayward and Paramor and the church cost £9500 to build – a debt taking until 1912 to pay off. A church hall was built in 1898 which became very useful when the church became very popular during WW1 and WW2 with troops. The hall was turned over for service personnel use and the profits from a canteen club paid to purchase two mobile canteens costing £1,000 each for the YMCA during WW2. The clock tower is regarded as one of Folkestone's amenities and Folkestone Corporation paid for its illumination. Sadly the pinnacles on the tower were deemed unsafe and were removed in 1971.

In 1972 three-quarters of England's Congregationalists voted to merge with the Presbyterian movement and the church became known as the '**United Reformed Church**'. In 1982 due to financial difficulties the seating was raised to use the hall also for concerts to increase income and in 1984 the Shepway Volunteer Centre was built on the side.

Samuel Plimsoll who is buried in St Martin's churchyard was also connected to this church. One of the foundation stones bears his name, but as he died in 1898 it is not clear how often he used the church - but we do know he went to the Tontine Street church. Incidentally he was too ill to lay the Radnor Park foundation stone so his wife deputised for him.

Canterbury Road Congregationalist Church was built in 1893 as a daughter church of Tontine St., but it closed in 1904 due to poor attendance. However Radnor Park church (after deciding to split from Tontine St.) reopened the Canterbury Road church under the Rev. Hallett – a former local Salvation Army Captain. After WW2 the congregation dwindled and the church suffered from vandalism and it held its last service in December 1969 before demolition in 1970. The site is now occupied by a complex of flats called Telford Court.

In 1880, Canon Woodward also obtained permission to build another church to accommodate the ever growing population – this one in the Sidney Street area. A bakers shop was acquired and adapted in 1880. Two of the Clewer Sisters became involved and they held their first service at Easter 1881. However the building proved to be unsatisfactory and they sought funding for a temporary church. Lord Radnor gave them land in Canterbury Road on the understanding that the permanent church, known as **St. Saviour's**, was built within seven years. The Iron Church opened in June 1882 and when the brick church was built, the former became the church hall, which has now been replaced with a Doctors' surgery. The church was defiantly Catholic to start with and the first vicar was the Rev. Hankey in 1885. In May 1891 the foundation stone was laid for the brick church which opened on 23 July 1893, even though not fully complete. It should have had a brick tower but to save costs finished up with a bell turret in 1899 to house three bells. But the church wasn't completely finished until 1913.

St. Saviour's put a daughter church down called **Creteway Mission Church** on the new housing estate at Creteway in 1953. The money to build it came from Government compensation from Christ Church. It was part of St Saviour's parish and later became known as the **Church of the Holy Cross** in 1959. In the 1970's services discontinued and the site was sold off in 1985.

The final church covered was the **Cheriton Road Cemetery Chapel**, opposite the bowls club. It was designed by Joseph Gardner and built in the cemetery in 1857. It closed in 1929 and was demolished in the 1950s.

Thirty-nine people attended the meeting, four of whom were visitors.

At the August meeting we welcomed back guest speaker Brian Doorne who gave us his presentation on '100 years of change in Saltwood'. Brian said he had lived in the village forty years, subsequently inheriting old photographs on the village, some of which were 100 years old.

He said one thing they didn't have when he joined the Parish Council was a village sign, which they now have and he showed us images of it. He then showed us a map for 1898 and pin-pointed the Castle Hotel, Grange Farm, the castle, the church, the pond, Victoria Cottages and the school. He followed with images of the same and also the garage, the well, various shops, four post offices, almshouses, the forge, Saltwood House, the Rectory, Summer House, Slaybrook Corner and House, with, in some cases, with what is there now.

Brian also spoke about various people who lived in the village including a man who had a large model railway running round his garden. He spoke about the pond and that the farmer was told off by the Parish Council for letting his cows drink from it; but sadly the pond has now been filled in.

He said that in the old days the village had one communal well where all the villagers got their water from, until a dead cat was found in the bottom of it after which it was covered over in 1930. He said the Council minutes recorded that a Henry Prebble slipped while hauling up a bucket of water from the well and died.

The village only had a war memorial stone which was dedicated in 1921 which did not list any names of the fallen, so the Village Society raised £6000 to have a memorial board made which has now been installed. Brian finished up by telling us about the Beachborough Summer House which burnt down and Brockhill Performing Arts School.

Forty-six people attended the meeting, five of whom were visitors.

On a rather sad note I would like to announce the death of Alec Perry on 17 July 2016 aged 90 years

Date for your diary:

The annual dinner will be held on Wednesday 12th October at the Indoor Bowls Club, Cheriton Road, at 7 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. £19 per person including gratuities.

Menu:

Starters: (1) Tomato & basil soup (2) Melon boat (3) Smoked salmon & king prawns

Main meals: (1) Lamb shank (2) Cod Florentine (3) Butterfly chicken in white wine & mushroom sauce.

Desserts: (1) Apple crumble (2) Lemon meringue (3) Fresh fruit salad.

The Folkestone & District Local History Society is a very successful and forward looking Society, both with its monthly meetings, talks & photographic displays. However, in order to continue in this vein we would like to take this opportunity to invite more members to participate in the management of the society by becoming committee members/officers.

The involvement required would be attendance at four committee meetings through the year and occasional assistance at monthly meetings. I hope you will consider the above.

Registered Charity No. 295994